

New London County Historical Society

11 Blinman Street

SHAW MANSION

New London, Conn.

Quarterly

Bulletin



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HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL

WE BEGIN THE NEW YEAR

We get our new year off to an earlier start than usual this year. Do please come and drink a toast to it at the Shaw Mansion, on Sunday, 2 January 1983, at four o'clock. Bring your friends and relatives, to see the house in all its seasonal glory. We provide the drinks and things for you to nibble on, but you will provide the cheer. At six-thirty, we will wish you all a most Happy New Year and God go with you until we see you again.

A CHANGE

Those of you who have not visited the Mansion lately, or driven by it, will take note of the difference in the appearance of the driveway. The old one of those quaint (I suppose) river-washed stones has disappeared and in its place is one of cement, marked off to look like paving blocks. Driving up it is markedly easier than on the old one, where you had to try to steer around high spots or tear off the under part of a car. Backing it down it is something else again, rather like backing down a ski jump, with, for the present at least, no gates to avoid. They still lie on the banks where they were deposited by the contractor. They have to be raised to clear the new level of the cement, and the weekend the welder was to arrive we had a snowstorm. They may have to wait until the spring now, unless we have an extended spell of warm weather. Your editor won't care a bit, for if there is slippery driving, there are no longer any ruts to keep one from skidding into a gate.

ACCESSIONS

Map of Waterford showing locations of 17th & 18th century bldgs - Gift of Robert Bucher.

Log kept by Benjamin Bill, Groton, 1792-3, of several voyages to West Indies and back - Gift of Harold Banks, Moravia, N.Y.
 Diary of Lucy Hurlbut, 1803-32 - Gift of Harold Banks, Moravia, N.Y.
 Photographs of Lake Konomoc spillway and dam under construction - Gift of Eugene Manning, Yantic.
 5 photographs of Yale-Harvard races, 1890 - Gift of Eugene Manning, Yantic.
 Rohrback genealogy, V.3, by L. B. Rohrback - Gift of compiler.
 Small account book of a Capt. Chappell, 1849, with purchases for Smack Citizen - Gift of Mrs. Judith Jones, New London.
 Pile of letters of the Howard family, 1852-62 - Gift of Mrs. Samuel Hanna, Ocean City, N.J.
 Recollections of New London of Seventy Years, by Charles B. Jennings - Gift of Mrs. Samuel Hanna, Ocean City, N.J.

HOLIDAY SUPPER, PERHAPS?

A Chicken Pie

Pick and clean six chickens, (without scalding) take out their inwards and wash the birds while whole, then joint the birds, salt and pepper the pieces and inwards. Roll one inch thick paste and cover a deep dish, and coule at the rim or edge of the dish, put thereto a layer of chickens and a layer of thin slices of butter, till the chickens and one and a half pound butter are expended, which cover with thick paste; bake one and half hour.

Or if your oven be poor, parboil the chickens with half a pound of butter, and put the pieces with the remaining one pound of butter, and half the gravy into the paste, and while boiling, thicken the residue of the gravy, and when the pie is drawn, open the crust and add the gravy.

Diet Bread

One pound sugar, 9 eggs, beat for an hour, add to 14 ounces flour, spoonful rose water, one do. cinnamon or coriander, bake quick.

Shrewsbury Cake

One pound butter, three quarters of a pound sugar, a little mace, four eggs mixed and beat with your hand, till very light, put the combination to one pound flour roll into small cakes - bake with a light oven.

N.B. In all cases where spices are named, it is supposed that they be pounded fine and sifted; sugar must be dried and rolled fine; flour, dried in an oven; eggs well beat or whipped into a raging foam.

from American Cookery, by Amelia Simmons, 1796

BOMBS, ANYONE?

Do any of you remember the Civil War cannonball that used to rest in the iron footscrapers in the front hatt? It is no longer there, and gone with it is a

smaller one, supposedly of Revolutionary times, and a couple of shells that were upstairs. During the summer, a publication arrived on the curator's desk from the American Association for State and Local History, and in it was an article citing the dangers of cannonballs, which historical societies had harbored for many years. Some of those of the Civil War were filled with black powder instead of being solid iron, made to explode on impact. The fact that they hadn't done that in no way removed the chance that they might. Black powder is notoriously unstable, and grows more so with age. The article suggested that curators get in touch with their local police.

This curator let it for for a while, but the article kept bothering her, so one dull day she finally called the New London police, was told they had no bomb squad, and referred her to a certain Lt. Shaughnessy at the Colchester State Police barracks. A call there eventually brought her into conversation with a Trooper Nardella of the bomb squad, who did a very good job of scaring her half to death. He said they take the cannon balls, put them in a place designed for this sort of things, and set off two pounds of dynamite with the aforesaid cannonball. They know exactly what that amount of dynamite will do, and if there is a larger explosion than there should be, they know the reliv was loaded with black powder. He told about taking several from the Farmington Historical Society, which produced an explosion that shook the whole town of Colchester, or wherever it was. He warned this society not to allow anyone to roll the cannonball around or try to lift it, and he would arrange to come down and take it off our hands. The curator suggested that as she drove past Colchester frequently, she could put it in her car and bring it up to him. He yelled, "Oh my God, Lady, NO, you are giving me palpitations of the heart." Then the curator brought up the subject of a Spanish-American War shell, which was upstairs, weighing probably 300 pounds, more or less, with not a soul knowing if it had been disarmed or not. That he said he would have to look at and definitely "Don't play around with those things."

In due course of time he arrived at the door early one morning, took the large cannonball, and a smaller one which had looked perfectly harmless, leaving only a grapeshot. He was asked the difference in him driving around with it in a truck, and the curator in a car which would give a much smoother ride. The answer was that he was paid to do this sort of thing.

Then he examined the Spanish-American War shell. It was so heavy he had trouble lifting it off its base, but he eventually got it reposing on its side on the floor and unscrewed a thingamajig in the base of it, revealing a long narrow cavity which reached up into the nose, all nice and black and shiny. He scraped a tiny bit off, very gingerly, remarking that it was probably picric acid, which was used to provide added explosive power and definitely not a safe thing to have around. So that, too, was slated to go. Then Officer Nardella's eye fell on a 75 millimeter shell, rather battered, picked it up, looked in it and asked what on earth was the caked grayish-black substance in it? So how did the curator know? Then he looked at the base of that, and lo, there was the firing pin, intact. "That would have blown the curator out the front windows, if it had been hit, even if the caked powder were perfectly harmless," was his calm remark. So that too, went out to the truck, in the hands of a very careful and less than calm Mrs. Knox, while the officer struggled with the Spanish shell.

Over a cup of coffee, a short lecture was delivered on the foolhardiness of historical societies accepting ammunition to display, adding that we had been very

lucky that not one of these relics had blown up. In a way the curator regrets their going, for children were fascinated, but in another way, she is extremely relieved that the possibility of sudden explosion has been removed. After all, the British didn't accomplish the destruction of the house in 1781, why should we take the chance of it happening now?

RECOLLECTIONS OF A LONG LIFE Reminiscences of Sarah Ann Weaver Newcomb (cont. from Apr.)

At the time of our marriage, the law of the State required that intention of marriage should be publicly announced. So the evening of a Sunday previous, this was read from the pulpit of our church by the minister: "Marriage is intended by Mr. James Newcomb and Miss Sarah A. Weaver, both of this city." The wedding occurred on Sept. 8, 1847, sixty people were present. Brother Henry and Auntie Turner are the only persons living who were among the guests. Weeks previous, Mrs. Almira Barker had made the wedding cake and came and served at the wedding. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Jabez Swan, then pastor of our church. He had been out of town and arriving late, he came at once to our house to perform his ablutions, and asked of Mother for a clean collar of my Father's to fit himself for the marriage. There was a wedding trip. It was a rainy night and we went on the boat to New York. In the morning we found Uncle Ira Bliss, who lived on Greenwich St., and remained two or three days. Grandmother Bliss and Aunt Sarah lived with him. One morning Aunt Sarah and I walked on the Battery before breakfast. Uncle Dillon Bliss, Cousin Clara's father, we also saw. From New York we came to Stamford to visit Aunt Sophia (Bliss) Warner. She had a daughter Elizabeth, of my age and we became fast friends, for years she visited us in our home and we were very fond of her. In later years Uncle Ira built a fine home and moved to Stamford, though for a long time continued business in the city. He frequently visited here. From Stamford we went to Providence to see the Gardners, friends of my father's. During our absence our parlor was newly furnished. As Mr. Newcomb had been housekeeping, not as much was necessary. A pretty three-ply carpet, mahogany furniture, six chairs, sofa, Boston rocker, two ottomans, card table, two small tables a large Astral lamp and two smaller glass ones, and a sufficiency of bed and table linen.

And so we began our new home in the house on Granite St., occupied partly by Mr. Charles Rogers and wife and children. Mr. Newcomb at this time had a salary of \$700 and was 1/3 partner with Mr. Cady, receiving one third of the profits of the business. Later he was admitted to full partnership.

We paid sixty-five dollars for rent. It was quite a change from the large rooms at home, but I found pleasure in my new duties. Mr. Newcomb was received as a son and brother by my family and the little boy became the pet of them all. He was a beautiful child, with his fine complexion, blue eyes and curling brown hair, and I was fond of making his pretty clothes and taking him to see my friends, but he was only loaned to us. After sixteen short months a sudden illness of two days and with broken, aching hearts we laid him beside his mother. There is an ambrotype of him in one of the pretty dresses I made for him, in a drawer. It had hung on the wall until a few years ago I found it was faded and removed it.

For several years, with the exception of laundry, I did my own work and thought it no hardship. I found time for sewing, reading - made all my own and my husband's underwear, even to knitting his socks, making his shirts, collars and stocks. At one time he had a handsome figured vest and mistaking it for

an old one, cut it over into a stock. Asking for his vest one Sunday, I found the old one, but a good laugh did not restore the handsome vest.

Before this, Aunt Ruth had returned to her Windham home, though we should have been glad to have kept her with us. She had brought a few things with her when she came. A Stoten jug, and a crocked stone bowl for salt, are all that remain, the bowl has been used for this purpose nearly seventy-five years.

Our neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Comstock, grandfather to Mrs. Sidney H. Miner, Mr. and Mrs. Mussey, grandparents of Miss Lizzie Brown. Mr. Grace, father of John. During the War of 1812 my mother attended a boarding-school kept by the Misses Waite, close to our home. When an attempt was made to burn New London, Grandfather Guy came in great haste to take her home. We had lived here two years or more when Mr. Pryer built a brick house close by, and we moved into it with him and his family. Here on February 24, 1852, Frederic was born. Although he was somewhat late, and had no written excuse, he met with a royal welcome, and we were too happy, as we looked at our fine specimen of babyhood. He was pronounced a goodly child, and grew and developed much in the usual way, but us his parents he seemed much beyond the ordinary. It was while we lived here, that my father decided to sell his house and move to Groton. He had built a fine house overlooking the river, and thither the family removed, 1850. Grandma was too lame to be put in a carriage, and so she was placed in a large easy chair, which was set in an open express wagon, and with several of her grandchildren around her, was conveyed to her new home. She had one of the front rooms and much enjoyed the scenery and the boats on the river. The land ran back to the old fort and Mother had a fine garden. I often packed Frederic in his carriage and went over for a visit, staying two or three days. He had a little black dog of which he was fond, but one sad night it killed a sheep and we thought it best to send him on a sea voyage. Father at this time was interested in the whaling ship business, though he still continued the store near the station. It was while living here that sister Emma was married to Mr. Seymour Farnsworth. He was an officer in the Pacific Mail S.S. Co. and visiting his brother here. Emma, being intimate with Mrs. Farnsworth, met him and the result was an engagement. After a long absence, he suddenly appeared in Groton at my father's. His ship was to be laid up a month for repairs, there was no telegraph and the steamer which would have brought a letter, brought himself. It seemed a fitting time for him to marry, so that he could later send for his wife - in the future - if he could not come for her. Father and Mother could no object, so a hasty wedding was arranged. A wedding and travelling dress, and wedding cake - all went along together in harmony. The ceremony was performed in the presence of the family and a few intimate friends, and the bride and groom were off on a flying trip to Brattleboro, Vt., to see Father and Mother Farnsworth. Another week, and the newmade husband, with heavy heart, was on his way to his ship, leaving a tearful bride to mourn his absence. Two years later, after the railroad was completed across the Isthmus, Emma went to join her husband, and California was their future home. Emma made frequent visits at the old home, coming first with Anna, then with Anna, Charley and Della and later, Maude, when she rented a house next to the corner of Washington and Brewer Streets from Mrs. Cecelia Crump, and here Charlotte was born. It was a year of unmitigated trouble and sorrow. While Emma was ill, little Maude fell down the stairs, with a china toy in her hand which broke in the fall. Her head was so badly cut that she was convulsed. She lived in great agony for 3 weeks, and it was a relief to all when the little life went out. Six months later, little Charley was taken with dysentery and in six short days he was laid beside her. The same year, during a severe storm the ship "Sacramento" commanded by Captain Farnsworth, ran on an uncharted reef and foundered. While passengers and cargo were safely landed, it was the rule of the company never

to reinstate a commander who had met with accident. Captain Farnsworth went into the coal business for several years. He was popular with the traveling public, and great influence was brought to bear in his favor. In an old snapshot containing an account of our "golden wedding" there is a fine testimonial to his Christian character, taken from a San Francisco paper.

While living in Groton, Grandma died at the age of 74 years in 1753. Seven years of life in Groton, and Father decided to return here, much to Mother's regret, for she was very fond of the new house. A house was rented on Richard St. for a year or two, and then the house on State St., opposite the First Baptist Church was bought for a permanent home.

Frederic was now old enough to attend school. A small school on Granite St., kept by an old lady, Mrs. Lindsley, and later on Broad St., by Miss Bailey. When he was five years old his father bought him a pair of rubber boots, but the temptation to go over the top got his feet constantly wet. So I told him if they were wet again he must go to bed when he came home. He could not tell how, but "the wet got in." So he was at once undressed and put before the fire in his flannel gown to warm and dry them. Miss Bailey taught the children many Scripture texts, and he consoled himself by repeating, "Let not your heart be troubled," etc. He was fond of using new words. A friend came in one day and talked of her teeth, and used the word "saliva." After she had gone he came to me and said, "Don't you think Saliva would be a good name for my kitten?"
(to be continued)

Dont forget to sent the office your change of address.

Mrs. Adam L. Knox, Resident Curator

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